

by its contact, and assumed a dark and sloughy appearance. The interior condition of the mouth had undergone no change. Such was the situation in which I found my patient, ten days after the accession of the fever.

I determined to make an alteration in the treatment, and directed that a powder composed of five grains of calomel, two of aloes, and one of extract of colocynth, should be given her every four hours. In the interval a few ounces of an infusion of bark and serpentaria, with porter and water as a drink; this course to be pursued until the bowels were freely evacuated. Twenty-four hours after, I found the condition of the patient greatly improved. The medicines had operated freely, bringing away large quantities of glairy matter, very similar to tar both in colour and consistence; the delirium and subsultus had gone off; the fever was much abated, and the morbid coating of the mouth was becoming detached and removed at each absterision. The same general treatment, modified according to circumstances, was continued for a few days longer, under which the local and general diseases were removed, and the patient happily restored to health, without experiencing the unpleasant effects upon the gums and salivary glands, so frequently the result of the repeated administration of mercury in our autumnal diseases.

To the advocates of the local origin of fever from some point of internal irritation, the above case will, I conceive, furnish a corroborative evidence of the correctness of their theory. The local affection will no doubt be considered a consecutive effect or accidental coincident of the general febrile irritation of the system, by those who consider fever an idiopathic disease. Without entering into the discussion of these respective opinions, I shall content myself with having given a correct history of the case.

*Washington City, March 28th, 1831.*

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ART. VII. *On the Treatment of Hæmorrhoids.* By WILLIAM M. FAHNESTOCK, M. D.

IN the thirteenth number of this Journal, page 179, et seq.\* there is a very lucid and succinct summary of the views entertained at present relative to the nature of hæmorrhoids, and as it would be useless for us to repeat what is there said respecting the pathology of this

\* Rev. *Des Hémorrhoides*. Par A. J. Montègre.

most tormenting and disagreeable complaint, we shall restrict ourselves to offering some considerations regarding the means of administering to its relief.

We shall not enter into any inquiries upon the propriety of interfering with the disease, or consume time with the question of the danger of arresting its progress. It is enough for us to know, that any inordinate irritation or discharge from the system, is a legitimate subject for the medical art; except from neglect or improper treatment in the early stage, it has assimilated its action with the operations of the general system, and, from habit, constitutes a necessary evacuation to maintain the healthful exercise of some other more important organ.

Purgation, which more or less modified, constituted for ages the general practice in this disease, and still continues to be the chief reliance of the physician, we conceive to be the most impolitic, if not the most prejudicial; and it shall be our object to expose the error of such a course, and advocate another, which we have in our power to sustain, not only by reasoning, but by a considerable experience. This last is certainly the best test of the value of therapeutic remedies, when derived from a strict analysis of the phenomena manifested during their operation; but even experience may be fallacious; and it is to this fruitful source of error, that we have had, heretofore, so much uncertainty and absurdity engrafted upon our systems of medicine. *Experientia fallax* was a conclusion arrived at in the earliest age of our science—even by the father of medicine.

It is one of the prominent features and distinguishing benefits of modern or physiological medicine, to have instituted a minute investigation into the disturbing properties of medicinal substances, and to have pointed out the stimulating qualities of the evacuant medications. Previously esteemed as debilitating medicines, incontrovertible facts prove them to produce considerable excitation on the mucous membrane of the alimentary canal, and whatever be the influence they exert on the general system, the effect on the tissue upon which they operate, is indubitably stimulant.

Prior to the indefatigable researches of the pathological school, and the discovery of the disturbances produced on the organic actions and functions of the different tissues and organs by medicinal agents, purgatives were used for almost every malady; but in this age of scrutinizing observation it is not sufficient to know diseases simply by their name and to prescribe for symptoms. It is necessary to understand the cause; to investigate the disorganization of structure; and not only to know the immediate but also the ultimate operation

of the medications employed: that is, not only the evident evacuation, but likewise the internal actions produced on the tissue to which they are applied, and those to which they are closely connected by intimate sympathies.

Thus, by physiological analysis it will be found, that the hæmorrhoidal affections, instead of being a distended or varicose state of the hæmorrhoidal veins, consists in high irritation and inflammation of the mucous membrane of the rectum, with effusions of blood into the cellular tissue; and that purgatives, instead of reducing by detracting humours, produce an increased afflux to the part, and create greater lesions and more permanent congestions.

We propose first, to inquire into the immediate effects of purgative medicines on the intestinal surface. These medicines, when taken into the alimentary canal, induces an increase of sensibility, irritation, and tumefaction of the mucous membrane which lines its cavity; the secretions become more abundant, and the contraction of the muscular fibres actively excited to expel the fæcal and serous discharges. All the purgative substances act in the same manner, but with different degrees of violence, and upon different portions of the digestive organs. They all produce a certain degree of irritation in the intestines, accompanied by redness, increased temperature, slight tumefaction, and sometimes pain. The disorder which then takes place is characterized by all the circumstances of a transient or somewhat permanent enteritis. In most cases a sense of obstruction, of heaviness, and even heat is felt at the epigastrium, with a reluctance of food—as the irritation passes from the stomach to the bowels, borborygmi come on, the abdomen becomes tumefied, and then colic pains and frequent stools follow. In its progressive march the irritating substance acts successively upon the various parts of the intestinal canal. In the duodenum it stimulates the orifice of the ductus choledochus, and promotes a rapid and copious secretion of bile; and as it proceeds downwards it excites the exhalation of a quantity of serous and mucous fluids, until it reaches the rectum and is expelled. When substances of an highly irritating nature are made use of, instead of mucous and perspiratory, the inner coat of the intestines furnish a certain quantity of blood; the colic pains are very acute; the anus becomes hot; violent retchings and tenesmus succeed each other. The duodenum, the lower portion of the ileum, the cæcum, and the inferior extremity of the large intestines specially receive the effects of the irritation, traces of which are to be found in the remaining portions of the whole canal; and the enteritis which follows persists for some days, and even has been known for weeks and months. The

sympathetic phenomena produced by purgatives, evince great disturbance in the functions of the intestinal canal. When colic pains come on, the pulse becomes irregular and intermittent; during the whole of the operation of the remedy, it is smaller and more frequent than in health. A general and painful sense of coldness or shivering is occasionally felt; the skin is dry; perspiration, urine, and the secretions of the mucous membranes of the upper part of the body are either diminished or suppressed. Muscular strength is impaired; there is an unwillingness to move; the sensations appear vague and imperfect; the intellectual functions are slow, and the inclination to sleep is often irresistible. The severity of these symptoms is in proportion to the intestinal irritation; when it is moderate they soon disappear, but when the impression of the purgative has been too great, the inflammation, far from disappearing, becomes stationary, and may even run into a state of adynamia. Purgatives never debilitate the intestinal canal; on the contrary they stimulate it to a certain extent, and increase its secretions, serous exhalations and peristaltic motion. Laxatives act in the same manner as drastics, with this difference only, that their impression is not so powerful, and that they may be more readily assimilated. We may easily pass by insensible gradations from the milder minoratives to the most energetic drastic, without being able to draw a line of demarcation. The particles of jalap and of croton oil, when largely diluted, are merely laxative; those of manna and cream of tartar, placed in contact with an intestine, the sensibility of which is much exalted, may inflame it to a high degree, and give rise to all the phenomena of a violent purge.

BEGIN, to whose excellent work, *Traité de Therapeutique*, we are indebted for the above views of the *modus operandi* of this class of medications, after an extensive and diligent examination of this subject, deduces the following conclusions:—1st, purgatives constantly stimulate or irritate the intestines; 2d, they never occasion general debility, but in consequence of the pain and fatigue they produce, by the cessation of the irritation previously existing, and lastly, for the material losses to which they give rise; 3d, when they exasperate instead of curing irritations, they increase the fever, heat, and all the sympathetic excitements, or produce general adynamia.

The foregoing considerations may admonish the reader to be careful and reserved in the employment of purgatives, and a cursory notice of a few of the laxative substances proposed for the cure of the hæmorrhoidal affections will expose the fallacy and absurdity of

using such irritating articles to the highly delicate surface of the inflamed mucous membrane.

Cream of tartar from its supposed very mild and cooling qualities has been largely used for hæmorrhoids. We have already remarked that even this, when administered in an inflamed condition of the mucous membrane of the intestine, is capable of exciting violent purging. The same authors who speak of it as a very mild and cooling laxative, ascribe to it the power of exciting the intestinal exhalents to a copious effusion of serous fluids, and it even bears the reputation of a good and certain hydragogue! Are such articles wanted to subdue inflammation in the lining membrane of the rectum? We think not, and discover an insurmountable objection to it, from its acknowledged property of weakening, by frequent repetition, the digestive organs.

Dr. GREGORY\* recommends calomel combined with antimonial powder three successive nights, to be followed by neutral salts in the mornings, when the disease is attended with, or arises from a heated state of the system. However much calomel is administered in this country in almost the whole catalogue of diseases, there are but few, if any who resort to it in this complaint. It is universally banished and condemned as the worst of remedies, from the very powerful and peculiar impression it leaves on the mucous surface of the alimentary canal, which must be accelerated by the adjuvants, the neutral salts; unless, indeed, the Italian principles of their operation, contra-stimulant be admitted; which we are not, as yet, disposed to accede to.

Sulphur for a long period sustained the reputation of being a specific in this disease. We do not think that we underrate the article when we declare our conviction, from a faithful experience, that many more will be disappointed in their dependence upon its virtues than will find benefit by it. Sulphur is a very insoluble substance, and creates a general excitation throughout the canal, without producing much exhalation from the capillaries of the intestinal surface, and consequently procures but small evacuations to relieve the distention of the varicose veins according to the old pathology, and upon which erroneous views it was prescribed. Administered internally, say MM. Edwards and Vavasseur, sulphur acts as a purgative; when taken in less quantity it increases animal heat and the acceleration of the pulse; it acts as a stimulant. Its exhibition continued for any length of time is capable of producing very serious conse-

\* Elements of the Theory and Practice of Physic, Vol. II. p. 363.

quences caused by its very stimulating action.\* All writers concur in ascribing to this medicine an especial action on the lower portion of the bowels, for which reason we disapprove of its use in the disease under consideration. Let impartial experiments decide the issue.

The distinguished Edinburgh professor, whose name we have already introduced, proposes to administer the sulphur in combination with the electuary of senna. So certain are the irritating and griping powers of senna, that it is scarcely ever administered in ordinary complaints, as a common purge, without using some modifying agents to correct its distressing effects. Even in small doses it proves a very powerful and irritating medicine, and therefore not well calculated to allay and remove inflammation in the tissue on which it acts, however disguised by medicinal condiments.

Balsam copaiva has been highly extolled, and is now one of the most prominent articles recommended for this complaint. It was introduced to the medical public by Dr. CULLEN, who acknowledges that he derived the information of its efficacy from an empiric. A little attention, however, to its properties, will show how utterly inapplicable it is in most of these affections. Almost all the writers on materia medica and therapeutics concur in ascribing to it very stimulating and exciting powers, producing nausea, griping, and acrid alvine evacuations. Dr. ARMSTRONG informs us, that when given in very large doses, it causes a sort of *vibratory feeling in the brain*, and a *febrile anxiety*, with a *mental disturbance bordering on insanity*; and the same author tells us that it sometimes produces an itching irruption on the skin.† Does it require any argument upon these facts to prove the condition of the intestinal surface? Any person accustomed to analyze the effects of medications, will recognise the exalted condition of the mucous membrane of the primæ viæ, and that to an intense and dangerous degree. The learned Dr. GOOD says, “I have tried this medicine often, frequently without the slightest benefit, though I have varied the dose: and when it has appeared useful, it has been chiefly in the case of *mucous piles*; and hence I am induced to ascribe its salutary effect rather to the common principle on which it is well known to act in irritations of mucous membranes generally, than to its laxative power: I mean that of stimulating the membrane throughout, and thus producing a revulsion in the immediate vicinity, as we take off an inflammation in

\* Manual of Mat. Med. Togno's and Durand's Trans. p. 246.

† Armstrong on Pulmonary Consumption, p. 274.

the eye by applying a blister to the temple or behind the ear.”\* The explanation of the copaiva acting by revulsion is certainly correct; but the author errs in comparing it to the revulsion produced by blisters at the back of the ear; that is a counter-stimulation—a revulsion acting on sound parts. The application of copaiva to the inflamed mucous surface, is operating upon the principle of *direct* revulsion; not like the other—stimulating another tissue and drawing the morbid excitement from the original seat of irritation to a distant and less sensible surface. Direct revulsion, in the case of comparison, would be to apply the cantharides to the inflamed conjunctiva! This kind of revulsion we are sure no practitioner would have the temerity to pursue, and the same philosophy which would deter us in the one case, should equally influence us in the other. Would any person with a knowledge of the pathological condition of the intestinal surface apply so irritating a substance to the very sensible and excited membrane? Would he not by this very process stimulate the capillaries to greater action, and consequently increase the tumefaction and induration? We do hope that reflexion has taken the place of dull routine and empirical practice; until it does, we are confident that the physician will be disappointed in his expectations, and his patient remain a sufferer of this disease—made obstinate by injudicious treatment.

Recently Dr. JACKSON, of Northumberland, urges with much zeal the employment of rhubarb.† With all proper deference for the respectable source from which the practice emanates, we still must add a remark on the powers of this medicine. The adviser very correctly observes, that “in the treatment of this disease, the business of the physician is to preserve a continually loose state of the bowels, without the use of any drastic or acrimonious purgative; or in other words, to avoid on the one part, the least tendency to costiveness, and on the other, every thing like severe purging, or even a relaxing diarrhœa. Some means, therefore, he must seek, which shall procure in some cases one, in others two or three loose but consistent stools every twenty-four hours:” but we do not concur with him in ascribing to his favourite drug these desirable qualities. Rhubarb, though considered a mild laxative, is often a very active cathartic, and not unfrequently produces violent gripes. It also possesses a considerable astringent quality, and generally leaves the bowels in a costive tendency after its operation: and from these circumstances we deem

\* The Study of Medicine, Vol. I. p. 269.

† American Journal of the Medical Sciences, Vol. VI. p. 315.

it not suited to cases of inflammatory action in the alimentary canal, or calculated to overcome constipation. Our principal objection, however, to the remedy is, that it is required to be taken too constantly, as we do not approve of continually disturbing the digestive function by medications. Another exception we take to the use of this medicine is, that we are often obliged "to modify its operation with a little ginger, caraway, fennel, or some other aromatic." All articles of this kind are always to be sedulously avoided from their heating qualities. We do not wish to set in judgment upon the value of a remedy which we have not employed to any extent, further than reasoning from the acknowledged properties of the drug and established principles of therapeutics. Should we find it necessary at any time to have recourse to a course of purgatives, or perhaps in more acceptable language, laxatives, we shall embrace the opportunity to give it an impartial trial. But all purgatives, however mild, leave, in our opinion, an irritation in the intestine, which constantly tends to excite a recurrence of the disease. We have never known a case radically cured by these medications, but daily see a succession of relapses, after having been treated by purgatives, which is the most unerring testimony of their baneful tendency. And as the gentlest laxative has a local irritant power, they may also prove injurious, and are therefore to be regarded in these affections with jealous apprehensions. Until the practice of HAHNEMANN, predicated on the law *similia similibus curentur*, and consisting in the employment of such remedies as are capable of exciting analogous symptoms to those of the malady itself, or the doctrines of physiological medicine shall be exploded, we shall remain distrustful of the propriety of using cream of tartar, calomel, the neutral salts, sulphur, senna, balsam copaiva, rhubarb, or any of this class of disturbing medications, in cases of exalted sensibility and inflammation of the intestines.

Having tried purgative and laxative medicines long enough to be convinced of their injurious tendency, our practice of late years consists principally in rest, diet, and mucilaginous drinks—to lay aside the disturbing medications and court the exercise of the natural functions. A patient labouring under an attack of hæmorrhoids, has the function of the alimentary canal much disturbed, and its lining membrane in an highly irritated and inflamed condition. The excitement in many cases extends to other parts of the viscera, and frequently fever is developed. Costiveness, the general immediate cause, is the principal difficulty to surmount; but is this effected by a few purgatives? We all know very well that there is always a tendency to costiveness after the operation of this class of medicines,



and we have just shown, that instead of diminishing the irritation, they increase it, and sometimes even to an alarming degree. The effect then of a cathartic is directly the reverse of the indication in the treatment of the disease; it excites an increased afflux of fluids in the capillaries of the membrane, and the accelerated impetus creates more extensive lesions and congestions; and thus produce the very tumours it is our duty to reduce. Success with purgatives is certainly very ambiguous, if the practice is not attended with much danger; at least in our hands, and we made use of the mildest, we freely acknowledge, that the amount of suffering from their administration, greatly surpassed the relief obtained by their use; and we are now satisfied that most is to be hoped for when they are entirely abandoned.

On being consulted in a case of hæmorrhoids, our course is, to place the patient, if practicable, perfectly at rest for a few days, and in all cases to prescribe emollient drinks, and order soft diet, such as corn, rye, or oatmeal mush and molasses—the rye and oatmeal we prefer. By rest the patient is relieved in a great measure from the distressing symptoms, and by observing strictly for a few days the above regimen, the irritation is allayed, and the regular exercise of the bowels established; and when this is accomplished, health is restored. Emollient drinks should be taken plentifully, and no others. Emollient or mucilaginous drinks have a special action on the living tissues—they reduce the susceptibility, as well as intense redness, and the force of their actions; and when applied to the irritated mucous membrane, have the power of subduing irritation, alleviating pain, and restoring the tone of the organic actions.

The greatest difficulty to encounter in this course is, to get the sufferer to abstain from all other articles for a short period. So fond are mankind of indulging their appetites, that many prefer to become martyrs to their gratifications, than make a slight sacrifice for a great deal of comfort. But we are sure, that if the physician deals honestly with his patient, and explains minutely the nature of his complaint, the importance of being very rigid in the rules regulating his diet, informing him of the injury from the slightest deviations, until the irritation and lesions are restored, he will find but little trouble to overcome all the obstacles. It is only the want of correct information and faithful admonition that makes the invalid so careless respecting attention to these seeming trivial though important matters; they should understand it, and be made acquainted with the consequences of medicinal applications, and the results of the different changes their operation will produce. This manner of proceeding

will always secure the proper attentions to the advice of the physician, which existing circumstances often imperiously demand, but which too frequently are entirely neglected. We have found no difficulty with our patients after apprising them of their condition, and the consequences attendant upon their delinquency; neither have we ever had a patient who strictly observed our directions return to us with a relapse.

Perseverance in the commencement, and until the irritation is completely allayed, is the principal object. For this purpose rye or oatmeal mush with molasses is to be made the common food, and barley water or other mucilaginous beverage, the constant drink. After the irritation is subdued, our advice is, in all cases, to continue to make one meal, supper, of the mush diet, at least for a month or two. By these means a soluble habit of the bowels may be established. And should at any time more than one day, or at most two days pass without an evacuation, the afflicted should recur to the mush to correct it: and should any premonitions of an attack appear, resorting to the above advice may obviate it entirely. We have arrested the formation of this disease by an early resort to these means, and we are confident that it is the best prophylactic measure that can be pursued, whenever the least symptom manifests an approach of an attack.

The topical applications recommended are numerous, and as opposite as they are diversified. We are acquainted with but two which deserves much notice. The first is cold water. This application is the most grateful of all others to any inflamed surface, but it is not always the most beneficial, nor is it the most prudent: in the treatment of this disease it has the sanction of many high names. We, however, have derived most advantage from a liniment made of burnt cork. Our mode of preparing it, is to char very fine, soft corks, which we rub in a mortar and bolt through a very fine cloth or sieve. It is then triturated with pure olive oil, to the consistence of paint, and to be applied frequently with a fine camel's hair pencil. The relief obtained by this application is very "prompt and even wonderful." We have seen persons in the most excruciating agony, from protruded piles, almost instantly relieved by this liniment. We cannot account very satisfactorily for its mode of action in allaying irritation; but similar effects obtain from its employment in violent cholera morbus administered internally. The origin of the medication we cannot learn: we had it from our preceptor, the late Dr. MARTIN LUTHER, who used it during a practice of twenty years, with distinguished success.

This is our treatment of simple hæmorrhoids. By strict attention to the above, we have never had occasion to resort to the painful expedient of excision. It is neglect, or maltreatment of the disease in the early stage, which renders it chronic and obstinate: this state, we believe, can only be remedied by continued perseverance in the course pointed out, until the irritation is entirely subdued, and a new habit is formed in the alvine evacuations.

When the case is attended with fullness of pulse, fever, and restlessness, we detract blood from the arm; and should the mucilaginous drinks fail to move the bowels, we then administer a small dose of castor oil, which is the only laxative we use under this form of disease.

Some time since, we conceived the idea of applying the extract of belladonna to overcome the stricture of the sphincter ani, which frequently produces strangulation, and presents a most formidable obstacle to the reduction of the tumour within the anus, on the same principle that it is used to dilate the pupil of the eye before an operation for cataract; but have been so fortunate with the means above recommended, that we have not met with a case which required us to resort to any other remedies. Lately we discover that the ointment of the belladonna has been successfully employed by MM. DE LAPORTE and LA BORDERIE,\* in cases of spasmodic contraction of the anus and the rectum. We think this remedy deserves much attention, and a faithful application, to test its virtues; by which we may hope, in many cases, to save our patients from the horrors of a surgical operation.

We do not deem it necessary to swell this article with a narrative of cases; an experiment or two will be the best illustration that our readers can have of the efficacy of the plan here recommended. Hereafter, should we find it necessary, we may furnish a few cases to contrast the purgative with the emollient practice.

The simplicity of our treatment may be made an objection by those who are fond of wielding the potent armoury of medicine, but its simplicity is its merit; for inasmuch as we advance to a knowledge of the laws of the animal economy, and understand the disturbances of the organism in disease, we will direct our remedies to modify the irritation and restore the exercise of the normal functions, by those means which approximate most closely to its healthful actions. And as we approach this consummation depends the certainty of success, and the establishment of a practice on a sure basis.

\* See this Journal, Vol. VI. p. 248, and Vol. VII. p. 250.